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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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SEABASING: POSTMODERN MAHANISM

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## **Executive Summary**

**Title:** Seabasing: Postmodern Mahanism

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**Thesis:** Seabasing will play a critical role in the execution of national security strategy because of four attributes which facilitate American influence abroad and winning the nation's wars. These four attributes are: (1) American presence abroad is accomplished effectively without having to occupy sovereign territory, (2) Military operations do not require host nation support, (3) The geographic position and composition of forces is mission centric, (4) Bases at sea are more secure than land bases.

**Discussion:** Seabasing is a concept that fundamentally has existed in the Navy since World War II. The Pacific War led to the U.S. using aircraft carriers and expeditionary forces to project power ashore instead of battleships, and underway replenishment vessels instead of coaling stations. During Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Maritime Prepositioning Ships (MPS) were added as crown jewels of projection of power ashore due to its demonstrated ability to significantly reduce deployment times for expeditionary equipment to operational areas. As it became more evident post-Cold War conflicts would be in the form of regional conflicts concentrated in the littorals, then Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Vern Clark promulgated Sea Power 21 in 2003 designating seabasing as one of four pillars to building a naval force to meet 21st century challenges. In 2006 the Naval Warfare Development Command and Marine Corps Combat Development Command worked together to codify seabasing in Naval Warfare Publication (NWP) 3-62M/Marine Corps Warfare Publication (MCWP) 3-31.7, Seabasing.

The NWP 3-62M states seabasing is comprised of seven overarching principles: (1) Use the sea as maneuver space, (2) Leverage forward presence and joint interdependence, (3) Sustain joint force operations from the sea, (4) Expand access options and reduce dependence on land bases, (5) Provide scalable, responsive joint power projection, (6) Protect joint/coalition force operations, and (7) Create uncertainty for adversaries. From these principles and their application in previous joint operations, the author derives four attributes which characterize seabased operations and have significant strategic benefits to missions supporting national security: (1) American presence abroad is accomplished effectively without having to occupy sovereign territory, (2) military operations do not require host nation support, (3) the geographic position and composition of forces is mission centric, (4) bases at sea are more secure than land bases. As the U.S. focuses on projecting influence abroad through the use of all elements of national power, these four attributes will lead to an increased use of naval vessels to protect national security through presence in forward operating areas.

**Conclusion:** As the U.S. focuses on projecting influence and demonstrating commitment abroad through the use of all elements of national power, these four attributes of seabasing will compel the U.S. to increase its use of naval vessels to protect national security through presence in forward operating areas.

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Seabasing: Postmodern Mahanism

by  
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April 30, 2010

## Introduction

Alfred Thayer Mahan's book *The Influence of Sea Power on History*, argued an industrial nation demonstrates preeminence by building superior warships which command the seas. Warships sail abroad to diplomatically engage foreign countries, decisively win battles using fleet tactics, and maintain presence abroad using coaling stations at strategic chokepoints instead of simply maintaining a coastal defense navy.<sup>1</sup> Mahan's work inspired many countries such as Japan, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States to develop their battleship fleet to project national power beyond their coasts. In 1907 Mahan's work prompted President Theodore Roosevelt to form the "Great White Fleet" whose mission was to sail to countries throughout the world, demonstrating American military strength and industrial capacity, including empowering ship Captains to conduct diplomatic missions as well as win battles at sea.<sup>2</sup> More than 100 years later, the U.S. continues to demonstrate its strength by maintaining a presence abroad, developing its ability to project both "soft" power, such as humanitarian assistance missions, and "hard" power using air strikes from sea based aircraft, cruise missiles and expeditionary forces to influence politics, deter aggression and win conflicts. While tactics have changed, such as the replacement of battleships with aircraft carriers, the use of American sea power to influence foreign politics continues to underpin national security strategy.

Seabasing will play a critical role in the execution of national security strategy because of four attributes which facilitate American influence abroad and winning the nation's wars. These four attributes are: (1) American presence abroad is accomplished effectively without having to occupy sovereign territory, (2) Military operations do not require host nation support, (3) The geographic position and composition of forces is mission centric, (4) Bases at sea are more secure than land bases. This paper will use the overarching principles of seabasing doctrine to

derive these four attributes, and subsequently demonstrate how these attributes significantly contribute to projection of American influence in the form of non-kinetic and kinetic operations.

## **Defining Sea Basing**

This paper will view seabasing through the lens of doctrine. The Naval Warfare Development Command & Marine Corps Combat Development Command published in August 2006, Naval Warfare Publication (NWP) 3-62M/Marine Corps Warfare Publication (MCWP) 3-31.7, *Seabasing* which codified previous seabasing concepts to create the official doctrine, herein referred to as NWP 3-62M. Seabasing is "the deployment, assembly, command, projection, reconstitution, and reemployment of joint combat power from the sea without reliance on land bases within the JOA (Joint Operating Area)." <sup>3</sup> A "sea base" is "scalable, expanding and contracting to match mission requirements by incorporating the full range of naval forces." <sup>4</sup> The doctrine of seabasing identifies seven overarching principles which play a major role in the means by which the U.S. achieves the national objective of power projection, bearing in mind that the DoD considers power projection as the application of all or some of its elements of national power - political, economic, informational, or military - to rapidly and effectively deploy and sustain forces in and from multiple dispersed locations to respond to crises, to contribute to deterrence, and to enhance regional stability." <sup>5</sup>

## **Debunking Misconceptions - What Sea Basing Isn't**

To have a clear understanding of seabasing, several mischaracterizations should be immediately discounted. Seabasing is not a panacea - it does not equate to a revolution in military affairs that fundamentally changes how U.S. forces fight, or that it completely eliminates the utility of host nation support or land bases. Seabasing does not enable the U.S. to access



every region of the earth or make forces invulnerable to attack, but seabased forces are significantly more secure compared to their terrestrial counterparts. Two major misconceptions addressed further below are that seabasing will be extraordinarily expensive, and that it is purely a "pet project" of the Navy.

While the construction of naval vessels inevitably involves expense, building a seabasing capability is far from cost prohibitive. The wide range of vessel types and sizes used in sea bases means smaller, less expensive ships can be built when budgets are austere, and these smaller vessels still add value to the execution of seabasing. This gradual increase in ship inventory, combined with the use of ships from the multinational partnerships, mitigates expense and gives seabasing fiscal resilience during difficult economic times. Two related Congressional Budget Office studies suggest seabasing is developing in a smart manner. The CBO 2005 report did not find an alternative to the Navy's seabasing plan where a reduction in cost would still preserve capability.<sup>6</sup> The CBO 2007 report purposely examined alternate plans, but found no marked advantage over sustaining forces ashore through seabasing.<sup>7</sup>

For example, early skeptics of seabasing pictured a sea base as having a large mobile offshore base as the centerpiece; typical renditions portray an enormous ocean platform that resonated concerns for being too slow for operations or too costly to build or maintain.<sup>8</sup> However a sea base does not require the creation of enormous city at sea. The NWP 3-62M instead demonstrates a sea base as a conglomeration of ships with the composition of ship type and quantity tailored to mission requirements. The publication provides hypothetical scenarios of seabasing using categorized scales of "small", "medium", "large" and "very-large" sea bases consisting of ships which are currently available. Headquarters Marine Corps, Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration's Seabasing Division along with the

Chief of Naval Operations' Expeditionary Warfare Division (OPNAV N85) lead the development of seabasing capabilities. By 2014 Maritime Prepositioning Forces will begin to expand capabilities to more rapidly deliver forces to crisis areas using ships such as the Long-range Medium Speed Roll-on/Roll-off ship (LMSR) (19 ships delivered to the Navy between 1996-2003), Mobile Landing Platform (MLP) (funded in FY09) and Dry Cargo Ammunition Ship (T-AKE) (9 of 12 delivered to the Navy by General Dynamics).<sup>9</sup> Other near-term seabasing enhancements cited by the NWP are vessels which are programs of record such as the Joint High Speed Vessel (JHSV), High Speed Vessel (HSV) and the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS).

The second major misconception is that seabasing is purely an endeavor by the Department of the Navy. This perception is incorrect - seabasing is not a "pet project" or one-dimensional effort by the Navy. Since its formal introduction in October 2002 as part of *Sea Power 21*, the development of seabasing doctrine has been lead by the Department of the Navy, but other services have contributed to the development of seabasing as a concept and capability. Joint and international services have recognized the need to require systems be interoperable with assets based at sea, both as a cost saving function and as a way of conducting future operations.<sup>10</sup> In 2007 the Army published the *Functional Concept for Battle Command 2015-2025*, which expressed the need to incorporate the use of sea based assets for missile defense or command and control nodes participating in an electronic network.<sup>11</sup> Recently at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, one of the Air Force's top leaders in manning, training, and equipment reinforced the need to make systems interdependent among the services, and stated that remotely piloted systems such as *Global Hawk* are prime areas in which to require future designs to be interoperable with assets based at sea.

In addition to joint services, numerous allied countries have helped evolve sea basing as a means of executing holistic solutions for crises in multiple regions of the world with scarce resources. The Marine Corps Title 10 war game, *Expeditionary Warrior* (EW), which takes place in Potomac, Maryland, has drawn participation and input from allies and joint services alike - EW 2008 drew "192 participants from all five services, 15 partner nations and numerous federal agencies."<sup>12</sup> *Expeditionary Warrior* is a series of scenarios which are set 10-15 years in the future, and tests the premise of conducting military operations using groups of ships based at sea without host nation support. The last three EW war games have demonstrated to participants the relevance of seabasing beyond the Navy and Marine Corps - it includes Army, Coast Guard, multi-national and various government agencies, especially those associated with affairs of state and intelligence across the range of military operations.<sup>13</sup>

### **Deriving Seabasing's Strategic Attributes**

The NWP 3-62M lists seven overarching principles for seabasing doctrine: (1) Use the sea as maneuver space, (2) Leverage forward presence and joint interdependence, (3) Sustain joint force operations from the sea, (4) Expand access options and reduce dependence on land bases, (5) Provide scalable, responsive joint power projection, (6) Protect joint/coalition force operations, and (7) Create uncertainty for adversaries.<sup>4</sup> Each of these principles is used to describe the four attributes which make seabasing such an important doctrine for future operations.

### **Attribute 1: Presence without Prolonged Occupation of Sovereign Territory**

A sea base assembles ships in regions of strategic interest to the U.S. and its partner nations, and uses their combined resources to intervene with expeditionary forces throughout the JOA. The conglomeration of ships used for the sea base employ the first overarching principle,

the use of the sea as maneuver space. This principle facilitates American presence without requiring forces to occupy neighboring countries because seagoing vessels hold the inherent sovereignty of their home nation whereas the territory of physical land for a nation terminates 12 nautical miles from its coastline.<sup>15</sup> Outside of this area a ship may generally operate without navigational restriction. Consequently, sea bases may exist for long periods of time near strategic centers of gravity often located near coastlines, such as major population centers, distribution facilities, seaports, airports, and government centers without having to acquire permission from the countries in proximity of the JOA, translating presence to the ability to exert influence, either through peaceful interaction with centers of foreign government and infrastructure, or through kinetic action. This legal aspect also enables the U.S. to mitigate dependence on host nation support, discussed later. *Sea Power 21* estimated over 70 percent of the earth's population lives in the littoral, a term defined as "any land or ocean within 650 miles (1046 km) of the coastline, which is equivalent to the furthest striking range of naval forces."<sup>16</sup> Since each ship in a sea base falls under the sovereignty of their parent nation, a sea base provides "presence" in both a legal and symbolic sense, with the additional capability of projecting military power inland.

The establishment of land bases is still critical to operations, but a sea base lessens the "iron mountain" (i.e., the support facilities, such as personnel, vehicles and supplies) by assembling, employing and sustaining U.S. and allied vessels at a geographic location at sea. While the first principle uses the sea as maneuver space to effectively establish American presence, the second and third principles, leveraging forward presence and joint interdependence and sustaining joint force operations from the sea, enable maintenance of the sea base and forces ashore. Ships are able to use interdependence of allied nations to maintain lines of

communication through the use of foreign replenishment ships or foreign bases. Units ashore receive logistical support from forces at sea - effectively moving the majority of the "rear fight" seaward, an area that is harder for an adversary to access. Currently this action of resupply is largely accomplished at a location ashore and then supplies and support missions are sent forward to troops, forward operating bases and other distribution centers. The sea base instead leverages off the U.S. and coalition asymmetric ability to establish maritime and air superiority to position the sea base wherever is most advantageous to the mission.

Additionally, facilitating American and coalition presence without requiring substantial tracts of land is a strategic communications victory. The U.S. policy of maintaining a forward presence often draws criticism from developing countries as being imperialistic. In the years following the cessation of hostilities from Operation *Iraqi Freedom*, many articles in both Western and non-Western media characterize the prolonged U.S. presence in Iraq as occupation.<sup>17</sup> American actions were portrayed as imperialistic and the Western media in particular saw them as a significant contributor to the expense of OIF regardless of the necessity for stability operations or fostering a long term commitment to execute a successful counterinsurgency campaign. By reducing the footprint of physical items, administrative support, and other things tied to a land base, seabasing helps assuage the negative connotations associated with having to occupy so much territory. Insurgencies and terrorists can feed off of this resentment to focus violence toward land bases.

## **Attribute 2: Operations Do Not Rely on Host Nation Support**

This attribute of seabasing also comes from the principle of expanded access through reduced dependency on land bases, in particular, those which are in foreign countries in the

vicinity of the JOA. Sea bases are able to still enable U.S. and coalition forces to access a country and receive their sustainment from replenishment ships which receive supplies from land bases in the U.S., Diego Garcia or allied nations. This attribute can be a significant factor at the operational level of war with regard to securing bases ashore for future operations, but more likely could become a strategic problem in peacekeeping operations. Limiting or containing a conflict at its nascence requires seizing the initiative quickly, and operations which involve the cooperation of neighboring countries, especially if physical space is required, can require political maneuvering that could adversely affect military operations from the loss of precious time. By removing host nation support as a critical requirement, seabasing mitigates the risk of an adversary exploiting this as a critical vulnerability to hinder U.S. intervention. On the first day of hostilities during Operation *Iraqi Freedom*, Saudi Arabia released a communiqué expressing their unwillingness to support the U.S. major offensive in to Iraq. The U.S. planned to conduct numerous operations involving allied aircraft based in Saudi Arabia much as it had done during Operation *Desert Storm*. Ultimately Saudi Arabia informally facilitated some U.S. logistic and maintenance support, but the U.S. eventually withdrew nearly all forces from Saudi Arabia and moved them to Qatar.<sup>18</sup> Under similar conditions, a different adversary might have more success in pressuring a nation from providing the U.S. any form of host nation support.

The application of seabasing doctrinal principles to Operation *Allied Force*, illustrate how seabasing alleviates reliance on host nation support. NWP 3-62M defines the principle of "leveraging forward presence and joint interdependence" as "joint/coalition forces operating from the sea base in conjunction with other globally based joint forces [providing] a Joint Force Commander (JFC) with credible offensive and defensive capabilities during the early stages of a crisis."<sup>19</sup> Naval forces were used during Operation *Allied Force* in the early stages of the NATO

military campaign because they had already been operating as part of their normal rotation to deploy to the Fifth and Sixth Fleet Operational Areas (OPAREA). The *Theodore Roosevelt* Battle Group, NATO forces and supporting logistic ships was by definition a sea base in the Adriatic. Host nation support would enable strikes from land bases in Italy, but the need for diplomatic clearances to operate was unnecessary for the U.S./U.K. sea base, already positioned to conduct offensive operations, and enforce sanctions and exclusion zones.

Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson once said, "A ship's a fool to fight a fort." The U.S. will always require placing some contingent of forces ashore to fight a campaign effectively. The principle of expanding "access options and reduce dependence on land bases" means seabasing will "complement forward basing in the JOA, reducing, but not eliminating, reliance on forward basing."<sup>20, 21</sup> Host nation support was available but the operational flexibility gained from the Adriatic sea base was valuable to expeditiously begin the aerial bombing campaign and provide the air commander multiple entry points from which to conduct assaults.

The third principle, sustaining joint forces from sea, dictates that "the sea base is sustained through interface with [existing] support bases and strategic and operational logistics pipelines, enabling naval and selected joint forces to remain on station, where needed, for extended periods of time." The NATO aerial bombing campaign during *Allied Force* was expected to last a few days but ultimately took 84 days.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, the U.S. was able to comply with political constraints and successfully executed operations beyond original expectations due to maritime superiority in the region and the establishment of sea lines of communication with major supply installations such as Sigonella or Souda Bay, Italy.<sup>23</sup> These three principles demonstrate how host nation support close to the JOA was not a critical requirement, and that the sea base allowed the U.S. to conduct operations using multiple access

points, for an extended period of time, while being politically sensitive to NATO operational constraints.

### **Attribute 3: Geographic Position and Force Composition is Driven by Mission**

The fifth principle of providing "scalable, responsive joint power projection" means the mission's desired end-state drives the size of forces, types of vessels used, and how to employ those forces. Ultimately, mission success is the strategic aim for all forces, and this goal is enabled by the operational flexibility of seabasing. The capability to shape force structure and position as the mission evolves, is highly useful in major combat operations like crisis response - the JFC is able to employ forces in nearly an "on demand" system as seaborne assets can be surged and positioned to create operational and tactical advantages tailored to a specific mission. During armed conflict, sea based vessels may be set virtually anywhere within the strike radius of aircraft, and may extend that range with the supplement of tanking assets. During non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO), a sea base may be positioned closest to urban areas, refugee camps, or other essential areas to render aid, insert peacekeeping forces, or evacuate personnel. Greater operational flexibility benefits the U.S. by increasing its effectiveness at mission accomplishment, an essential quality as a world hegemonic power.

Scalability is best demonstrated by the five phases codified as lines of operation in NWP 3-62M on seabasing: Close, Assemble, Employ, Sustain and Reconstitute. Two of the main differences between seabasing operations as codified in NWP 3-62M and post-World War II naval operations are the assembly and reconstitute lines. *Assembly* occurs when civilian and military forces coordinate operations, integrate systems, and move materials such as vehicles and munitions to prepare for expeditionary operations at sea rather than at a location ashore.



Conversely, *Reconstitution* is the return of forces to the sea base for reassignment, conducting the backload and reconfiguration of load schemes at sea rather than ashore. As more sea-sea connectors enter service, reconstitution will become the preferred method of reconfiguring load schemes. The other phases used in seabasing are more traditional: *closure*, the movement of forces toward a geographic area, assembly, *employment*, the physical insertion of forces, *sustainment*, the continuous logistical and operational support of forces ashore and *reconstitution*. The following recent example of seabasing demonstrates these phases and how they aided with operational flexibility, and effective American commitment during a highly successful seabased interagency operation.

**Humanitarian Aid/Disaster Relief (HA/DR) example: Operation *Unified Response***<sup>24</sup>

Haiti, suffering from a magnitude 7.0 earthquake on January 12, 2010, received assistance from twenty U.S. ships, all of whom brought a variety of capabilities. All twenty ships had to remain at sea due to damage to the major seaport facilities at Port-au-Prince.

**Close** - rapid response was critical in order to ensure timely assistance was rendered to Haitians with serious injuries and little time to be rescued. To expedite assembly, U.S. Naval ships such as the Nassau amphibious readiness group with an embarked Marine Expeditionary Unit, Military Sealift Command and U.S. Coast Guard vessels varying from hospital ships, salvage ships, and oilers, simultaneously mobilized with the mission of HA/DR.

**Assemble** - as ships arrived on station in vicinity of the Gulf of Gonave, coordination rapidly began and personnel transfers between ships and to the shore using sea/air connectors began - these were Landing Craft Utility ships (LCU), Landing Craft Air Cushion vessels (LCAC) and

various helicopters. Movement of supplies from distant locations in the U.S. such as Norfolk, Virginia was sent to the Sea Base for redistribution and delivery ashore.

**Employ** - the joint effort among multiple government and non-government agencies including foreign ships which are en route to render assistance began almost immediately after the earthquake hit. The on scene commander directing relief efforts is the first ship on station until the senior captain can assume command - this is normal to joint operations and seabasing doctrines.

**Sustain** - ongoing logistical support of personnel ashore are conducted using equipment, supplies, vehicles from the sea base due to a nearly complete absence of usable materials ashore in the area of operations.

**Reconstitute** - relief efforts for this disaster stricken area were concluded on March 12. The Sea Base was reconstituted and disbanded for further tasking.

This example demonstrates the operational advantages of positioning forces where needed facilitate the strategic gains of mission success in U.S.-led HA/DR operations and conveying to the U.S. and Haiti as sense of the coalition's level of commitment. Vessels tasked for the HA/DR mission were positioned so they had an efficient ingress to the devastated country, bypassing airfields and seaports which were made unusable by the earthquake. The number of forces committed by the U.S. and the international community was highlighted by many news articles as showing the level of assistance being given to the population of Haiti. The ability to reposition dedicated assets allows forces to optimize resources and adjust as the mission evolves.

#### **Attribute 4: Security of Forces and Operations**

Using ships to facilitate the assembly, employment and sustainment of forces, rather than moving the "iron mountain" ashore provides better security. The last two principles, "protection of joint/coalition operations" and "creation of uncertainty for adversaries" enable a marked improvement in security over land based operations. Currently during Army or Marine expeditionary operations, Afloat Prepositioning, Maritime Prepositioning Ships, and lighterage provide the capability to transport the majority of supplies ashore, but these ships are manned by civilian mariners, and their ships do not have the ship survivability standards of naval combatants.<sup>25</sup> Consequently they often execute their mission in a permissive environment to offload supplies, transfer cargo or provide other logistical support. Whether a seaport is established through territory gained through military action, or from a host nation facilitating a location, it is in a fixed position in an environment which is more familiar to the indigenous population. Because it is in a fixed, known position, the seaport is more susceptible to attack by mortars, small arms, ballistic missiles, and weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Land bases, whether a large, main operating base such as Camp Lemonier, Djibouti, or a smaller forward operating base such as Camp Falcon in Iraq, have been likened to the Maginot Line, allowing adversaries to better plan offensive and counter-offensive operations by removing the variable of location<sup>26, 27</sup>. Additionally these bases can become targets of political brinkmanship for host nations, as their adversaries escalate tensions with them in an effort to force allied countries to dedicate resources and funding, then deescalate to attrite funding and popular support of U.S. and coalition forces.<sup>28</sup> Achieving a wider dispersion of forces and fluid locations is easier to accomplish using ships at sea, hindering adversaries from targeting and engaging supporting forces.<sup>29</sup>

This mobility and dispersal also further demonstrates why a sea base does not necessitate a large mobile operating base at sea. The added security of being based at sea reduces the number of personnel and material at risk for IEDs, rocket attacks and other insurgent activities. While the use of security patrols, intelligence collection, explosive ordnance teams and electronic warfare are means of mitigating risk for land based units, these countermeasures also require more personnel, materials, and involve greater risk to personnel compared to its seabase counterpart.

Seabasing places a greater reliance of placing the logistic piece of the "iron mountain" at sea and reducing the footprint required ashore. The added security from making support forces harder to locate and target is inherent to seabasing because an adversary must search a larger area given there are no physical obstructions such as mountains or marshlands that narrow the search. An adversary must then use more fuel, employ additional electronic sensors or air assets to improve their search efficiency, which can become difficult in trying to overcome a layered defense and established air and maritime superiority. Even "low tech" solutions such as fishing vessels or Cessna aircraft functioning as "bird dogs" looking for friendly positions can be mitigated by a combination of layered defense and mobility. Additionally, few nations can target forces beyond the physical horizon - a range limited by height of eye and line of sight, and even fewer are proficient.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to physical security, operational security (OPSEC) is better protected because a sea base is removed from the foreign population, which may attempt to conduct ISR on forces ashore using known locations of land based antennas or social engineering methods from closer interaction with the local population, such as through hotel services provided to the base by the host nation. The last overarching principle of seabasing, uncertainty, comes from the ability of

ships to remain mobile. A ship constantly on the move reduces the predictability of force location and the point of origin of landing craft or aircraft. For example, ships of a sea base repositioning at 25 knots can move 600 nautical miles within 24 hours, creating an area of uncertainty more than half the size of Texas. In comparison, a fixed base provides adversaries an area from which to monitor movements of allied forces or predict avenues of approach because of accessibility by roads, trails, or paths.

At sea, an adversary's ability to collect intelligence is reduced because of the inability to use human intelligence beyond visual observation, as well as signal and imagery intelligence which typically requires close proximity to exploit. Information security (INFOSEC) improves through reduced pathways to intercept data or access to personnel to collect signal or human intelligence. Since all vessels are afloat instead of being made fast to a pier or connected to shore facilities, no landlines are used, and data connectivity is either done via "point to point," which is the sending of electromagnetic waves directly between two antennas or relayed via satellite. With the added protection of encryption and programmed frequency shifts, interception of data is difficult, even for some technologically advanced countries.

### **The Influence of Seabasing on National Security**

The Department of Defense provides the U.S. the ability to project American influence abroad by making regions of the world accessible to instruments of national power. The means of accomplishing this end vary from "soft" power such as coordinated operations with government agencies using DoD assets and command and control facilities, to the role at which the DoD is most proficient - the use of force. Department of State Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs Andrew Shapiro's comments at a town hall meeting highlight the

importance of including the military in foreign affairs, and mirror comments within the DoD *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations (CCJO)*: "only through the effective integration of all the tools of national power (defense, diplomacy and development) can we hope to achieve our broader objectives of security and prosperity."<sup>31</sup> In providing this worldwide accessibility, two major recurring themes in national security stand out as particularly complementary with seabasing: Protect the homeland by (1) facilitating the U.S. ability to influence countries from abroad (2) winning the nation's wars. The first uses "soft" powers such as diplomacy, economic sanctions, and politics, and the second uses "hard" powers of military force.

This first theme is expressed in numerous previous National Security Strategies (NSS). The most recent NSS states: "To protect our Nation and honor our values, the United States seeks to extend freedom across the globe by leading an international effort to end tyranny and to promote effective democracy."<sup>32</sup> This theme is also contained in major political speeches by the current administration.<sup>33</sup> To accomplish this aim requires the U.S. must be able to influence countries to side with the U.S. at what it sees as tyrannical regimes, and what the U.S. considers effective democracy.

The first two attributes of seabasing, providing presence without requiring the occupation of sovereign territory and mitigating dependency on host nation support to execute missions, are significant enablers of garnering support from other nations. From a foreign country's perspective, the use of seabasing by the U.S. means that country does not need to risk committing substantial tracts of land for an indefinite period to U.S. and coalition forces. This aspect may be attractive to a foreign country because of internal political pressures, concerns about internal security from attack by neighboring countries or terrorists, or imposing on scarce land and resources, which may cause animosity toward the government by the populace. From

the U.S. perspective, it is able to execute missions using military assets abroad, keeping the fight away from U.S. coastlines and keeping the option of using military force close at hand, which is particularly useful with peacekeeping missions in countries where conditions may deteriorate quickly and without warning.

These concerns occurred during Operation *Enduring Freedom*. By its doctrinal definition, the seabase in this instance consisted of Carrier Strike Groups and Expeditionary Strike Groups, multinational forces, and various ships from the Military Sealift Command. Together they provided joint forces with critical capabilities such as close air support, resupply, robust medical facilities, and personnel extraction by fixed and rotary wing assets based on units located at various points along the Pakistani coastline. The "Indian Ocean seabase" provided a significant level of U.S. presence without having to locate more assets ashore in areas such as Pakistan or India. This sea base may exist for long periods of time even after ISAF troops withdraw from Afghanistan, providing support and security of U.S. and coalition military or diplomatic operators. The ability to exist for an indefinite period of time is particularly important in a counterinsurgency role where U.S. commitment must be perceived as long-term and capable of sustaining military and non-military forces ashore.<sup>34</sup> This "Indian Ocean sea base" may surge and recede as needed to match the ebb and flow of this complex political environment.

Secondly, host nation support is not needed from the neighboring countries of India and Pakistan where internal forces such as Pakistan Taliban or the Communist Party of India could try to undermine coalition efforts using methods varying from political brinkmanship by anti-U.S. political parties, who could use U.S. presence to threaten government upheavals to gain political concessions, to an actual physical attack of a fixed base. Still the U.S. has a force

capable enough to seize the initiative at the early stages of crisis to contain or defeat insurgency. Lastly the large presence of ships is a testament to U.S.'s enduring commitment to assuring democracy without occupation of territory by supporting the country's development including the defeat of subversive anti-government forces. The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review also highlights the trend toward strained resources and urbanization of the littorals, making the maneuver warfare-centric option of sea basing U.S. assets even more appealing to strategic planners.<sup>35</sup> Seabasing enables the U.S. to lead the ISAF effort at maintaining a presence in the vicinity of Afghanistan while assuaging concerns of indefinite occupation. The strategic communications benefits of facilitating foreign support and the clear reduction of U.S. requirement for land to execute operations are beneficial to garnering support, especially during the information age.

The second major theme, winning the nation's wars, is accomplished by the flexibility in operational planning gained from the first three attributes of seabasing, but also in force protection afforded by the attribute of security compared to land bases. Planners may take advantage of seabasing's ability to sustain presence in international waters to create multiple access options for invasions, or use presence as a deterrent against a country using military force. Jeremy Black, author of *Rethinking Military History* writes, "The dominant American attitude in the early 2000s serves to underline the degree to which the complex interaction of public culture and strategic culture produced, at any one moment, very specific understandings of war and victory, which in turn shaped responses to the prospect of conflict - not least as a presumption of success is the major cause of decisions for war."<sup>36</sup> Black states that regardless of the subject country, the major cause for war is rooted in the presumption of success. The role of U.S. intervention is to advise and assist using "smart" power, and the role of military presence is to



discourage the use of armed conflict as a viable option.<sup>37</sup> Seabasing's ability to provide the U.S. a persistent presence without the political impacts of physical occupation acts as a deterrent and as a rapid response force.

The importance of maintaining this operational flexibility of readily transitioning between peacekeeping and peacemaking operations is also crucial in future conflicts. Thomas Franck, law professor and former director at the United Nations Institute for Training and Research notes many peace operations as times internationally-led peacekeeping operations must quickly transition to offensive operations. During 1992 UNISOM I more than 300,000 Somalis died and millions fled when UN civil negotiations failed and the UN coalition was unable to prevent looting of relief supplies to Somalia by armed clans. With growing difficulties in supporting the humanitarian mission, the UN adopted resolution 792(1992) which welcomed the assistance of U.S. forces in Operation *Restore Hope*.<sup>38</sup> The U.S. conducted an amphibious assault on Mogadishu using 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, Army, Navy, Special Operations Forces, and activated three ready reserve force ships including two offshore petroleum discharge system tankers and a merchant ship used for training merchant marine students were used to repatriate troops.<sup>39</sup> These forces secured airports, sea ports and major relief centers that permitted widespread relief as civil cooperation was mandated by overwhelming force.<sup>40</sup> While Operation *Restore Hope* was later marred with negative political criticism over ambiguity in end-state, the U.S. was nevertheless able to successfully establish a sea base that allowed follow-on operations to secure key objectives and provide logistic resupply ashore.

Seabasing is a principle method of using partnerships toward future intervention and conflict. Seabasing can be likened to taking the infrastructure, skill sets and tools of a major U.S. city and moving it in the vicinity of a country in the JOA. The use of partner nations brings

the benefits of a foreign city including familiarity with culture, language, terrain and environment. The U.S. ability to forge partnerships abroad is central to national security strategy. The interdependency associated with long lines of communication, particularly when host nation support is untenable, forges alliances and partnerships with foreign countries who wish to strengthen their role in the world by working with international militaries. The advantages of security through mobility and keeping friendly forces from using foreign soil of allied countries as battlegrounds make partnerships more amenable as involvement does not necessarily require a country to commit troops, but vessels or logistic support becomes a critical requirement.

Policies such as the national security strategy change with each new admin; however certain themes remain that are based on the values on which the U.S. was founded and have shaped foreign policy since the rise of the U.S. as a world power. National security begins with creating American presence abroad, and America must be effective at winning wars. Documents such as the Capstone Concept for Joint Operations highlight the decrease in host nation support and reduced access to countries politically and from the proliferation of anti-access weapons. Coupled with the U.S. intention to continue to bring all elements of national power to protect the homeland there is a move to project American influence beyond its shores that is reminiscent of Mahan's *Influence of Sea Power on History* effect on foreign policy. More and more the U.S. will turn to naval vessels to demonstrate its commitment to partner nations, while using technology, maritime and air superiority to limit our footprint ashore.

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